

Ward 6 NPA Meeting
Thursday, February 4, 2021

Steering Committee Members present: Matt Grady, Mary Riley, Michelle Mraz, Joel Fitzgerald, Nelson Martelle (acting committee member) and Caroline Hauser (acting committee member)

Start time: 6:30 PM

End Time: 8:45 PM

Public Comment:

Comment made opposing just cause eviction. This has the potential to create a perpetual tenancy. There is little the landlord would be able to do in dealing with a tenant who creates a problem, like sexual harassment.

Rep. Gabrielle Stebbins gave an overview: There will be an online forum with the 3 commissioners of the recently released "tax structure commission" on 2/11 from 6:30-8:00PM. Link is <https://ljfo.vermont.gov/committeesandstudies/taxstructure-commission>. She also reported on budget adjustments, coronavirus relief funds, support to the Vt. State Colleges for COVID-related expenses, continuation of the "everyone eats" program, funding for Global Warming Solutions Act of 2020 technical assistance, completion of broadband extension projects, and partial relocation costs for BHS. Public-input hearing on the Governor's proposed budget is 2/8. Sexual exploitation bill passed. Rental assistance-COVID funding is available. Please reach out to gstebbins@leg.state.vt.us and tbluemle@leg.state.vt.us.

DPW Water Resources Division Rate Affordability Study:

Jenna Olson and Jessica Lavalette presented on the results of this study. Water fees will be improved to be more fair to low volume residential customers. There will be programs to help economically disadvantaged rate payers. See the link: www.burlington.gov/DPW/Water/AffordabilityProject .

Jim Condos, Vermont Secretary of State:

Spoke on elections in the era of COVID. The three premises he relied on were: preserve voting rights, protect the health and safety of all poll workers, and maintain the integrity of the voting process. Jim and his small team were able to achieve very successful results by implementing numerous measures: rigorous outreach, 45 day early voting, same day voter registration, increase access to all people, create a system for visually impaired voters, allow town clerks to process ballots within 30 days of election, have drop-boxes in 175 towns where before there were none.

Mayoral Candidates Forum:

The following Mayoral candidates attended: Mayor Miro Weinberger, Patrick White, Ali Dieng, and Max Tracy. In addition to providing brief statements about themselves, each

candidate answered several questions which were the same for each candidate, follow by a closing statement.

Miro Weinberger: In an era of simultaneous crises: a global pandemic, a recession, a time of racial injustices, and a climate emergency, Burlington needs experienced leadership. Under my leadership during COVID, Burlington is one of the safest cities in the country. I have served the city as mayor for 9 years, including overseeing a budget of \$200 million and 600 employees during a crisis. Experience matters and is a key issue in this race. Consensus with members of all political parties has been achieved in all that I have accomplished; an example is 9 years of budgets. Affordable housing has always been and remains a priority. Zoning to support housing has been put in place and more than 1,300 homes built. Serving as mayor has been the honor of my life. The next mayor has to finish leading under the pandemic. For more information, visit miroformayor.com.

Ali Dieng: My entire life's experience has been preparing for mayor. I have proven leadership on the city council, a member of the board of finance, chair of the city's Racial Equity Inclusion + Belonging Committee, as founder and manager of parent university, and working with the Burlington school systems. A leader should be able to build and manage a team with the right people, manage resources, and listen to the people. As an Independent, I am not entrenched in any political party. I have experience working to gain consensus among members of different political parties, but it is not about taking credit; it is about doing quality work and bringing people together. Affordable housing is a big problem-we should explore "rent-to-own" programs and build up. Want to find people who think differently and who bring collective goals to come together for housing solutions, As Mayor, would introduce a racial equity bill. The people of Burlington are ready for a change, not by someone still entrenched in politics, a **real** change. Visit alidieng.com .

Max Tracy: I want to make Burlington a city where all can afford to live; to invest in a vibrant future, to clean up the lake, uproot systemic racism, to reduce our impact on the climate, and to work together. I have served on the city council for the past 9 years, am president of the council, have worked on 9 years of budget cycles. As mayor, would exercise good judgment, something which has been lacking in the current administration. An example is the police online harassment scandal; it should have been dealt with immediate disciplinary measures. Going forward, we need sound judgment. As council president, I work regularly with different parties in order to achieve consensus. For proper growth and development, it must be balanced; equity and inclusion for all must be a priority. Property and education taxes must be addressed. Will prioritize strategies that work for all families. Visit maxformayorbtv.com .

Patrick White: My work in different fields has given me experience to be mayor: work in grandfather's small business in Middlebury, massage therapist, and current work in the insurance industry. People come to me to help because of that experience. Leadership is about fair chances and doing what is right. There are too many barriers to enter the

home-ownership market. We need to build up because there is no more space in Burlington. There is a limited supply, high demand, and high taxes, all of which make housing scarce and hard to obtain. We need to lower the barriers to entry. Need to work with the SBA to aid growth. My 20 years of small business experience has taught me about fair chances and doing what is right. Even in his campaign, he has to bring about consensus, and can do this despite differences. See patrick4mayor.com .

South District City Council Candidates:

Grace Ahmed: I am a Single mom of 5, community organizer, work in education equity, for workers rights, renters rights. I'm running because of the need for transformation of public safety without excuses, need creativity. I like the idea of the public oversight board using the recommendations of the ACLU and support decision-making power for regular folks and creating structures so regular people have more participation in matters like budgeting, etc., all the way down. The most important part of leadership is listening. Also important is making contact and being able to have conversations. I am less separated from the communities that are underrepresented. Consensus was achieved when the VNA/Family Room had a financial crisis and was part of a team that was able to keep it running as an independent organization. I am for scientific rigor and will create a place where people can trust the process, understand things better, and participate in true democracy, where neighbors can come together and make decisions for themselves. Visit graceforbtv.com .

Joan Shannon: I've served on the city council for years, both in Ward 5 and then the south district serving both Wards 5 and 6. My accomplishments include leading the state in smoking bans, starting the Blue Ribbon Committee in response to the financial crisis which arose out of Burlington Telecom, COVID work such as coordinating the mask-making effort and working with the mayor to close bars before the state did. The need to move forward on racial justice issues is very important, and I am committed to working on this. Protecting the environment, affordable housing, and combating climate change are on the forefront of the agenda. Experience is integral to leading the city through the significant crises it is facing. The city council benefits from all different types of experience. My professional experience includes being a small business entrepreneur, and real estate, where I try to help people into home ownership and never represent developers. Concession was achieved by gaining tri-partisan support for the Blue Ribbon Committee and for the mask-making effort. The council could currently benefit from more tri-partisan support. My knowledge of the Pine Street Superfund site comes from my work on the Lake Champlain Committee. The site has been remediated as best it can be- it is capped and buried underground where it will be left; digging it up would be more dangerous. Different perspectives on issues are highly important and there is nothing more valuable than reaching out to people to become thoroughly informed. I will listen to your input as part of my consideration, and will follow up with you afterwards. Visit joanshannonvt.com .

Ranked Choice Voting for city councilors:

Tom Proctor, of Rights and Democracy, spoke in favor of Ranked Choice Voting: Under the current system of voting, the candidate who doesn't win a majority can still take office, run-off elections are expensive, with poor engagement, and more options doesn't equal more choice. With Ranked choice voting, only the candidates with the majority (>50%) wins, there is no runoff election, and there are more options, which means more choice. The candidates are ranked in order of preference. When the ballots are counted the candidate that comes in last after the first count have the ballots that place them as 1st choice recounted, but with the 2nd choice counted. This is repeated until one candidate has >50% of the vote. more at website: betterballotburlington.org .

Karen Paul: Ranked Choice Voting: Explained why she voted against it. Ranked choice voting is essentially the same thing as instant runoff voting. Burlington had this in place and repealed it. There seems to be strategic voting in candidates to get as many second place votes. This system rewards people for trying to get second choice votes. Strategic positioning can occur in encouraging voting for second place as happened in the past. The campaigns focused on appealing to the broader issues, but no strong positions were taken. While in effect in Burlington, IRV didn't lead to strong leadership; many people's second choice won. The current ballot item is only for city council races. The goal is ultimately for all races. Most of the successful IRV cases don't involve political parties. Burlington already has caucuses and primaries. Ranked choice didn't serve Burlington in the past. Also, it doesn't make sense to have 2 voting systems; one for city council and the other for mayoral and school board elections. more at fairvote.org .

Other ballot items: There are 4 Charter Changes, including IRV, and 3 questions including the school budget (see Jeff Wick's presentation).

-Airport Commission: adding 1 new seat for Winooski and an additional seat for Burlington. a "yes" vote is to support this.

-Just-cause evictions: see the Ward 6 archives for the recent panel on this.

-Thermal Energy: deals with the city's ability to regulate thermal energy systems in residential and commercial buildings. A vote "yes" would support working to regulate and make Burlington more responsive to thermal energy by requiring more responsible energy equipment, less dependence on fossil fuels.

-Building de-carbonization question: related to the thermal energy question above.

Voting on whether want the the mayor and city council to, in regulating thermal energy, to create policies, programs, and incentives related to delivering clean energy benefits that would not adversely impact low and moderate income Burlingtonians, BIPOC, and otherwise disadvantaged community members.

-Cannabis Sales: Act 164. In order for cannabis sales, it first has to be voted on.

Karen's blue newsletter with detailed information will be coming out next week.

School Board Commissioner Jeff Wick:

- The school budget: The net change is very small, <1%, although that translates to an education spending property tax increase of approximately 6%, maybe a bit smaller. They have been very careful to not have budgetary increases, The board is hopeful the state will assist with downtown BHS costs. There is a \$6mil surplus from the last fiscal year, most of which was applied to the current budget. The school budget link is: <https://www.bsdt.org/budget> .
- Great construction progress is being made at the downtown BHS site; they hope to Open in early March.
- Testing at BHS for PCB's is still continuing.
- The renovation of the high school will continue when more is known about the results of the testing.

Notes submitted by Mary Riley

Attendees:

Ward 6 Attendee Report

Ali Dieng (He/His)
Alison Prine
Andy Barker
annagrady
Becky Levasseur
Caroline Hauser (she/her)
carynlong
CEDO NPAs
Charles Messing
Christina Colletti
Cleary Buckley
Connie Krosney
Cynthia Hennard
dbou (ward 2)
Diane Gayer
Eli goldman
Elizabeth (Betsy, BAP) Allen-Pennebaker (she-her)
Emily Elliott

Gail Rose
Grace Ahmed
Greg
James Leas
Jeffrey Wick
jen berger (she/her/hers)
Jenna Olson
Jessica Lavalette
Jim Holway
JimCondos
joanshannon
Joel Fitzgerald
Jordan Redell
Karen Paul
Ken Grillo
Margaux Higgins
Maria (Masha) Shelukha(she/her)
Mark Oettinger
Martha Whitney
mary
Mary Riley
Matt Grady
Max Tracy (he/him)
Maya Ward 1
Meghan
Michelle Mraz (Michelle M.)
Mike Kanarick
Miro Weinberger
Neil Groberg
Nelson Martelle
owner

partick johnson
Patrick White
Penny and Keith Pillsbury
phyllis kaplan
Rep. Stebbins, Chitt. 6-5 (she/her)
Rights & Democracy
Robert Backus
Samantha Sheehan
Shannon Jackson
Steve Goodkind
Sue Burton
Sugar
Thomas Hall
Tom Hyde
TOWN MEETING TV
Zail Berry